

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1174

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 2845

NODIS

FOR ATHERTON FROM TOON

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR EAID IS

SUBJ: TRANSITIONAL QUARTER AID FOR ISRAEL

REF: (A) TEL AVIV 2827, (B) STATE 098270

1. THANK YOU FOR YOUR MESSAGE WHICH WAS TIMELY AND HELPFUL.

2. I TOOK THE OCCASION OF MY MEETING WITH RABIN THIS MORNING TO RAISE AGAIN THE QUESTION OF TRANSITIONAL QUARTER AID, SAYING THAT I WANTED TO MAKE CERTAIN THAT I HAD UNDERSTOOD HIM CORRECTLY IN HIS COMMENTS TO SENATOR JAVITS (TEL AVIV 2827)-VIZ., THAT THE ISRAELI PROBLEM WOULD BE MET IF SUFFICIENT FUNDS WERE ON HAND TO ENSURE NO DISRUPTION IN MILITARY SUPPLIES. THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THAT MY UNDERSTANDING WAS CORRECT. HE WANTED TO MAKE CERTAIN THAT FUNDS WERE AVAILABLE FOR THE FINANCING OF THE WEAPONS AND SPARE PARTS WHICH WERE PURCHASED ON THE OPEN MARKET AS WELL AS THROUGH THE PENTAGON. HE FELT ISRAELI AUTHORITIES SHOULD MEET WITH PENTAGON AND OMB EXPERTS TO ASCERTAIN HOW MUCH ISRAEL NEEDED IN THE YEARS TO COME AND HOW THAT AMOUNT COULD BEST BE FINANCED. HE REALIZED THAT THERE WOULD BE DIFFERENCES, SAY, OVER THE QUESTION OF WHAT WEAPONS ISRAEL NEEDED, BUT HE WANTED THESE DIFFERENCES EXAMINED TOGETHER SO THEY COULD BE RESOLVED. THE IMPORTANT THING IS TO MAKE SURE THAT THERE WAS NO DELAY IN THE DELIVERY OF WEAPONS AND SPARE PARTS IN THE YEARS AHEAD SIMPLY BECAUSE ISRAEL DID NOT HAVE ENOUGH MONEY FOR A DOWN
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PAYMENT AT A SPECIFIC DATE.

3. THE PRIME MINISTER SAID HE WAS PLEASED TO LEARN THAT WHEN KOCHAV, ECONOMIC ADVISOR TO THE DEFENSE MINISTER, WAS IN WASHINGTON RECENTLY HE HAD HAD A MEETING OF THE MINDS WITH OMB EXPERTS IN REGARD TO THE PREPARATION OF THE BUDGET FOR FY 78. THE ISRAELIS NOW UNDERSTOOD WHAT DETAILS WOULD BE NEEDED AND IN WHAT FORM AND PROCUREMENT SHOULD FROM NOW ON BE ON A MORE ORDERLY BASIS.

4. I THEN RAISED THE SUBJECT OF THE DISAGREEMENT WHICH HAS SURFACED IN THE PRESS ON THE QUESTION OF TRANSITIONAL QUARTER AID AND SAID THAT I HOPED A CORRECTION WOULD BE ISSUED: IT WAS SIMPLY NOT TOLERABLE TO LEAVE THE IMPRESSION THAT THE PRESIDENT HAD RENEGED ON A COMMITMENT. WE HAD MADE IT CLEAR IN JANUARY BOTH HERE AND IN WASHINGTON WHAT ISRAEL COULD EXPECT AND THIS HAD NEVER BEEN MENTIONED IN THE LOCAL PRESS, DESPITE THE FACT THAT EVERY OTHER DETAIL SEEMS TO HAVE EMERGED. RABIN RESPONDED THAT HE DID NOT WANT TO REOPEN THIS QUESTION. HE HIMSELF HAD NEVER SAID THAT THE PRESIDENT WAS GUILTY OF A BREACH OF COMMITMENT. I REITERATED THAT THE PRESIDENT'S POSITION HAS BEEN PERFECTLY CONSISTENT FROM BEGINNING-I.E., JANUARY 22 WITH DINITZ AND 23 WITH RABINOWITZ, TO EN-I.E., PRESIDENT'S LETTERAZO ALBERT. I FELT IT DESIRABLE TO CORRECT ANY IMPRESSION TO THE CONTRARY. THIS PART OF THE DISCUSSION ENDED WITH AN APPARENT AGREEMENT TO DISAGREE ON THE ISSUE, WITH CONSIDERABLE PUZZLEMENT ON MY PART AS TO WHY RABIN BALKED AT COMPLETING THE RECORD.

5. THIS WAS CLARIFIED IN SUBSEQUENT EXCHANGE WITH IERAN IN WHICH HE TOLD ME THAT THE PRIME MINISTER HAD NOT RPT NOT KNOWN UNTIL I MENTIONED IT YESTERDAY THAT WE HAD MADE AN OFFICIAL APPROACH TO THE FINANCE MINISTER ON JANUARY 23 INFORMING HIM OF THE PROPOSED FY77 FIGURES. I SAID I WAS ASTOUNDED TO LEARN THIS, BUT IERAN REPEATED THAT IT HAD NOT BEEN BROUGHT TO THE PRIME MINISTER'S ATTENTION AND THAT HE HAD BEEN SURPRISED WHEN I REVEALED IT YESTERDAY. I SAID THAT IN THAT CASE, THERE MAY HAVE BEEN A GENUINE MISUNDERSTANDING, AND WE AGREED TO LEAVE IT AT THAT.

6. COMMENT: INCREDIBLE AS IT MIGHT SEEM, I HAVE BECOME JUST FAMILIAR ENOUGH WITH DISARRAY ENDEMIC IN THE SITUATION HERE TO ACCEPT THAT THE FINANCE MINISTER MIGHT NOT HAVE INFORMED THE CONFIDENTIAL

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PRIME MINISTER OF THIS IMPORTANT APPROACH WHICH OCCURRED THREE DAYS PRIOR TO THE PRIME MINISTER'S DEPARTURE FOR HIS U.S. VISIT. RABINOWITZ IS NOT THE MOST FORCEFUL OF MINISTERS AND HIS VOICE MAY NOT HAVE BEEN HEARD AT THE CABINET MEETING WHICH WAS HELD ON THE EVE OF THE VISIT.
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